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Frances Goldscheider
Eva Bernhardt
Trude Lappegård

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The Second Half of the Gender Revolution in Sweden: Will it Strengthen the Family?

Frances Goldscheider¹, Eva Bernhardt², and Trude Lappegård³

ABSTRACT

This paper presents research primarily about Sweden to illustrate an argument that the trends normally linked with the second demographic transition (SDT) can be reversed as the gender revolution moves into its second half, the increasing involvement of men in the family. The theoretical argument compares the determinants and consequences of recent family trends in industrialized societies provided by two narratives 1) the SDT and 2) the gender revolution in the public and private spheres. It examines differences in theoretical foundations and implications for the future, centering on how each views the importance of gender and intergenerational relationships in people’s lives. The SDT narrative is based on an ideational theoretical foundation while the gender revolution narrative is based on an interpretation of the structural changes in gender relationships caused by the industrial revolution and the demographic transition. The SDT considers family ties to be much less powerful than does the gender revolution. Most importantly, the SDT predicts continued below replacement fertility and union instability while the gender revolution predicts stronger families with more children. Although the family trends underlying these two narratives are ongoing and a convincing view of the phenomenon as a whole has not yet emerged clearly, the gender approach seems to be the more fruitful one.

¹ University of Maryland, College Park, MD, USA
² Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
³ Statistics Norway, Oslo, Norway

Corresponding Author:
Frances Goldscheider, Family Science, University of Maryland
Email: frances_goldscheider@brown.edu
INTRODUCTION

Evidence is accumulating that after more than a half century of growth in female labor force participation, which for most of this time has been linked in the research literature with low and often lowest-low fertility (Bernhardt 1993; Brewster and Rindfuss 2000) and with increased union dissolution (Ruggles 1997), long-observed linkages are weakening and some are even reversing (Engelhardt and Prskawetz 2004; Engelhardt, Kögel, and Prskawetz 2004; Matysiak and Vignoli 2008). Most dramatic is the fertility turnaround. The countries of Europe that once had the highest fertility and the lowest levels of female labor force participation, despite still having low levels of female labor force participation, now have the lowest levels of fertility (Kohler, Billari, and Ortega 2002), even if some upturns have been reported recently (Goldstein, Sobotka, and Jasilioniene 2009). The highest fertility in Europe is now found among the countries with the highest levels of female labor force participation. There may also be other turnarounds underway.

These new trends, of course, are quite recent. Most theorists who have sought to explain the longer-standing family trends, particularly those linked with the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) (e.g., Lesthaeghe 2010; Thornton 2001; Hakim 2001) have continued to support their theories, incorporating gender as part of their story (e.g., Lesthaeghe 2010), although many scholars have downplayed or even ignored the significance of the early increases in female earnings and men’s domestic contributions. A growing group of theorists, however, is beginning to take these reversals seriously. Most argue that these reversals in fertility and union dissolution are likely to be linked with state policies that provide support for families, reducing work-family conflict for those with active parenting roles, focusing primarily on women (e.g., McDonald 2000; Hoem 1993). Our approach, while not dismissing the importance of extra-family supports
that reduce work-family conflict (whether by employers or by government programs), considers the turnaround to be fundamental, and argues that the growth in female labor force participation should be seen simply as the first half of a profound gender revolution, in which women join men in the public sphere of work and employment. That early part of the gender revolution might indeed have stressed families, but as the gender revolution continues, we argue that men’s joining women in the private sphere of the family might actually increase fertility and reduce union dissolution, and hence strengthen families.

This paper will review the major findings of the Swedish program of research, “Domestic gender equality and modern family patterns,” together with other recent studies, in the context of a larger argument about the positive effects of the second half of the gender revolution on the family. We will present analyses done with a longitudinal Swedish study (YAPS), and argue that the negative aspects of family change linked with the SDT really reflect the workings out of the gender revolution, and that the particularly problematic elements (very low fertility and high levels of union dissolution) can be reduced by the ‘completion’ of the second half of the gender revolution.

We will focus on two central outcome measures, fertility (particularly the transition to a second birth) and union dissolution, although we will mention research on union formation and couple migration patterns, as well. We also examine the processes that affect fertility and union dissolution, in which different studies examine the determinants of gender role attitudes (of different kinds) while others predict the actual sharing of housework and childcare. We include results of analyses of the actual sharing of parental leave, work adjustments to parenthood, and gendered migration patterns, all of which support our view of the family friendliness of ”the second half of the gender revolution.”
BACKGROUND

For the past four or so decades, the industrialized countries have been in the midst of a process of family change commonly called the "Second Demographic Transition" (Lesthaeghe 2010; van de Kaa 1987). The trends most characteristic of this process include dramatically reduced fertility, both delayed and lower levels of marriage and childbearing, and great increases in nonmarital cohabitation, union instability, and births out of wedlock (Lesthaeghe 2010). Technical demographers investigate the extent to which lower fertility has resulted simply from delay, which is eventually recuperated later in the life course, and how much appears to be permanent for current cohorts; the answer appears to be that recuperation is evident, but slight (Goldstein, Sobotka, and Jasillonie 2009).

Researchers have found the SDT to be a useful shorthand to refer to this complex of trends, but there is little consensus on what the determinants and consequences of these trends might be, or on how general they are. Cliquet (1992) sees these changes as simply a continuation of the (first) demographic transition, which was characterized by dramatic declines in fertility and mortality; Coleman (2004) agrees, and also points out a number of potential inconsistencies, including the possibility that the SDT is not general in the sense that the first demographic transition has proved to be, but rather primarily a European phenomenon.

It is not unusual that such disagreements exist; rather, it is surprising that there have been so few. The view from the middle of any major demographic change is never clear. One does not know where it is going, how long it will last, or whether it will reverse, much less what had been causing it. Will it lead to disaster, a new equilibrium, or something else?

This was certainly the case with the (first) demographic transition, the major cause of which was assumed for a long time to be physiological. Some argued that recent social and
economic changes, such as urban living or female education, were sapping mankind’s ”vital forces.” (For a review, see Hutchinson 1967.) Although there is still not total agreement about the relative impacts of economic development and family planning technologies in some countries, the physiological explanation, at least, was finally ruled out, although not until the 1930s (Pearl 1939).

The post-World War II baby boom was equally puzzling. Moderate term projections for the US population made prior to the baby boom, e.g., in 1940, were dramatically, even laughably, lower than those made 20 years later at its height (Duncan and Hauser 1959), which in turn were laughably higher than those of the 1980s when it seemed a distant memory. In response, Easterlin (1978) developed a theory predicting that such oscillations would continue into the demographic future. As he expected the next peak in 1984, this prediction was clearly not realized, although some have tried to account for the delay (Macunavich 1998; Van Bavel and Reher 2013).

Although it may take many more years before we have clarity on what the causes and consequences of the phenomena linked with the SDT really are, it may be time to assess alternative explanations and likely trajectories, if only because the implications of the SDT narrative are so problematic. Theoretically, the SDT envisions family relationships to have become dramatically subsidiary to individualistic concerns, as people pursue their ”higher order needs” (Lesthaeghe 2010; Maslow 1954). Couple relationships are assumed to be weakly committed and transitory, and parenthood is frequently minimized or avoided altogether, leading to well below-replacement fertility.

In contrast, however, it may be that most of these SDT trends are the result of a structural shift in the relationships between men and women, as yet incomplete, which has led to a situation of considerable confusion about what men and women expect from each other, leading to what each couple experiences as endless negotiation. This would also reduce couples’ willingness to
commit, particularly their willingness to undertake perhaps the biggest commitment, which is having joint children. If so, when the gender revolution eventually completes, a new balance might emerge, based on a new, more equal relationship between men and women, together with increased commitment to each other and men’s increased commitment to their children. This process is well underway in several countries, providing the basis for considerably more optimism about the future of family relationships in industrialized countries.

Hence, unlike Easterlin, we do not predict oscillations, and unlike Lesthaeghe, we do not predict continued entropy, i.e., family heterogeneity and decline. As we discuss below, in fact, we predict a strengthening of the family. To get there will require many reversals in well-established relationships in the factors linked with family demographic phenomena, such as union formation, family building through childbearing, and union dissolution. Is this reasonable, or even possible? In fact, the literature on reversals and “turn arounds” is growing rapidly, as we will discuss below, although it is not yet clear what many of them mean.

The turn around that first startled the field was that between female labor force participation and fertility. Using data at the national level, Rindfuss and Brewster (1996) showed that whereas a simple regression between these two processes was negative in the 1970s, consistent with general theories of women’s time costs predicting that gainfully employed women would have fewer children than women whose work is focused on the home, by the 1990s, the slope had turned positive. This has generated a lot of research questioning whether the relationship had also reversed at the individual level (Ahn and Mira 2002) and whether the puzzle could be explained by including omitted variables, like family policy (Hilgeman and Butts 2009; Matysiak and Vignoli 2008). Of course, in countries with extremely high levels of female labor force participation, such as the Nordic countries, female labor force participation is so high that non-employed women have become extremely selective, rendering that argument almost
meaningless. More relevant though is that a substantial proportion of mothers of small children (but not fathers) in these countries, 25 percent or more, exercise parental rights to work part time (Eurostat 2013).

But the second half of the twentieth century has recorded other turnarounds. Based on data from the 1950s, Barnard (1976) famously characterized the marriage market in terms of education as producing highly educated unmarried women (the “cream of the crop”) and poorly educated unmarried men (“the bottom of the barrel”). In a detailed historical analysis of Bernard’s image, however, Torr (2011), expanding on a similar but more limited analysis by Goldstein and Kenney (2001), revealed that Bernard’s characterization had changed drastically by the 1980s, so that women with low levels of education, while not avoiding family formation, cohabit or become unmarried parents. Highly educated women, in contrast, are very likely to marry. It seems plausible that the marital success of well-educated women reflects men’s recent preference to marry a women with higher rather than lower earnings (Goldscheider and Kaufman 2006). This is fortunate, given the “reversal” in educational attainment by gender (Van Bavel 2012); otherwise, well-educated women would face an even greater squeeze in the marriage market.

One interpretation of the reversing female labor force participation-fertility relationship comes close to our own. Feyrer, Sacerdote, and Stern (2008) argue that as female employment increases from a rarity to a commonplace phenomenon, women can exert more pressure on their partners to reduce the fertility-dampening burden of housework, allowing both partners to realize their fertility desires. Below, we develop this argument in greater detail.
The Gender Revolution

The gender revolution is producing shifts that in many ways continue the changes initiated by the industrial revolution, and in that sense, is a continuation of the processes underlying the first demographic transition, although we agree with Lesthaeghe (2010) that its dynamics are totally different. The first demographic transition focused nearly entirely on intergenerational family relationships, as couples reduced their fertility in reaction, in part, to declining mortality, and in part to the changing economic relationships between the generations. Children became relatively much more expensive, with the extension of education, while they also became much less necessary to their parents, either as useful labor as children or as future partners and inheritors, because the role of family farms and businesses in the economy dwindled.

The gender revolution, in contrast, focuses less on the family’s intergenerational relationships than on the family’s other axis, its gender relationships. The seeds of the gender revolution were planted by the industrial revolution, but its results have only been emerging seriously over the past 50 or so years in most industrialized countries. It is a revolution with two parts, reflecting the ways the industrial revolution reshaped society and the relationships between the genders.

The early industrial revolution essentially created two spheres of human activity, the public and the private, as the dominant agricultural subsistence family economy broke down with urbanization and the growth of industry and commerce. The public sphere swelled with the growth of non-family activities outside the home, including paid work in factories and offices, as well as investment activities such as politics and education, and from the beginning, at least among the countries earliest to industrialize, the public sphere was dominated by men. The private sphere is the realm of the home and family, which was increasingly privatized and left to women, as first men withdrew to more productive activities outside the home and then children
withdraw into a life dominated from an early age by educational institutions (Walters 1984). Thus the first part of the gender revolution in industrialized countries occurred when technological changes led women to emerge out of the household economy into the public sphere. Women undertook new roles that gained more support for their families than they could provide in their domestic roles, much as technological change brought men out of the agricultural household economy a century earlier for the same reasons.

The gender revolution is an extension of the demographic transition in another way, as well. There was a massive restructuring of adult lives, particularly women’s, resulting from the declines in fertility and mortality. The declines in fertility and mortality re-shaped the female life course because, with smaller families and longer lives, caring for the young could no longer be a life-long, full-time career for them, as it had always been until at well into the 20th century (Watkins, Menken, and Bongaarts 1987). In the primarily agricultural economies of the 19th century, lives were relatively short. Although about half of the gain in life expectancy since then was due to the near-eradication of infant and early child mortality, half was not (Jacobson 1964, Fig. 1). When 19th century women married at about age 24 and bore five to seven children over the next ten to twenty years (not all of whom, of course, survived), they would have children living at home until they were close to 60 years of age, by which time they were normally widowed and not in good health, themselves. Their adult years were in large part their childbearing and child raising years. By the peak of the baby boom 100 years later, however, when young adults married and had children at very young ages, structuring a life around home and family no longer fit the years the decline in mortality had given to them (Watkins, Menken, and Bongaarts 1987). If women married at age 20, as they did in the early 1950s, and quickly had two to three children, when their last child left home they were still in their early 40s, yet they could expect to live another 30 or more healthy years.
This new demographic reality, then, facilitated women’s move into the public sphere. Although the major analyses of the early growth of female labor force participation suggest that economic changes that created increasing demand for women’s paid labor drove the growth in female labor force participation (see Oppenheimer 1973 and Goldin 1992 for the US; Durand, 1975 for a comparative analysis), the ways demographic changes had reshaped women’s lives made them more able to accept this new demand. Hence, women’s move into the public sphere was multiply determined. It had, as well, multiple repercussions on family life.

The first half of the gender revolution, the dramatic rise in labor force participation among women (including the mothers of small children), was seen to be, and to at least some extent was, a weakening of the family. Women had added economic support responsibilities to their family responsibilities, with little relief from the latter, a “second shift,” as it were (Hochschild and Machung 1989), putting pressure on them to compromise by reducing their fertility. There is ample evidence that throughout the early years of the growth in female labor force participation, employed women had fewer children than women who were not employed, and women who had career plans expected to have fewer children than those who did not (see the reviews for the US in Waite and Stolzenberg 1976; for Sweden, Bernhardt 1972 and Andersson and Scott 2007). They also reduced their time in housework (Aguíar and Hurst 2009) but not their time in childcare (Bianchi 2000).

There is also evidence, although weaker, that marriages in which the woman was employed were less stable than those in which she was not (see the review in Sayer and Bianchi 2000). Certainly, states with higher levels of female labor force participation have had higher levels of divorce over the past 100 years or so, although the causal arrow in this case, as in most of the other studies, is not clear (Johnson and Skinner 1986; Ruggles 1997). Nevertheless, the massive rise in divorce paralleled the initial growth in female labor force participation. Further,
new life course territories meant that husbands and wives spent fewer and fewer of their joint years as the parents of dependent children, increasing the need for negotiations with each transition (Goldscheider 2000). Whatever the reasons, however, the rise in divorce, together with the concomitant increase in approval for non-marital sexual relationships (Thornton and Young-de Marco 2001), has led both men and women to resist commitment, and hence, to the massive increases in out-of-wedlock childbearing and cohabitation, key characteristics of the SDT (Sobotka 2008).

The SDT and the Gender Revolution, Compared

These two narratives, the SDT and the gender revolution, attempt to account for the same set of facts. They differ strongly, however, in their approach to explanation, their understanding of the meaning of family relationships in adults’ lives, and their view of the future. In this section, we draw out these contrasts.

Theoretical Differences

In Lesthaeghe’s (2010) review (in which he cites his earlier statements with various co-authors going back to 1986), he theorizes that the SDT is responding to the development of new values, and is hence not rooted in structural conditions, beyond relative affluence. These new values are instead independent drivers of individual behavior. Lesthaeghe’s narrative thus joins Thornton’s ”developmental idealism” (Thornton 2001) and Hakkim’s ”preference theory” (2001) by privileging ideation over changing structural conditions as explanations for important human behaviors, despite the powerful and ongoing structural changes underway in the relationships between the genders.
It seems inappropriate to privilege attitudes and ideas as major shapers of behavior, given how rapidly attitudes on family issues have been changing (Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001). The gender revolution is thoroughly structural, so that undergoing the changes implied by the second half of the gender revolution should at least partially relieve the stress underlying the more problematic elements of SDT behavior. As we will review below, with the completion of the gender revolution, the world is likely to experience close-to-replacement fertility and greater family stability.

The Role of Family in Adult Lives

A second difference between these two narratives lies in their assessments of the role of family in adults’ lives. Although Lesthaeghe never makes this argument explicitly, he clearly feels that adults’ having rewarding relationships with partners and children should not be considered among individuals’ ”higher order needs.” Instead, he suggests, they are part of the ”solidarity and social group adherence and cohesion” (2010: 213), which is being sacrificed to individualism. How important partnership and parenthood are would seem to be a critical issue in any approach to the family changes that the SDT narrative addresses. Lesthaeghe may be accurately describing the current ideal male life course, which has greater leeway for following individualistic moral imperatives than women’s (McCarthy, Edwards, and Gillies 2000), and hence is both focused totally on work and idealizes the freedom to have multiple, short-term relationships. But few women feel this way, and it is possible that not that many men do, either.

Others writing on this issue often take an even stronger position, and express amazement that modern individuals would ever have children at all, and might feel equally averse to conjugal relationships that might involve them in their care. Coleman discusses parenthood only in terms
of ”duty”, as well as ”cost and inconvenience”; and ”20 years of partial house arrest” (2004, p. 18). Although it seems likely that he is being ironic at this point, he is far from alone among those discussing the SDT in assuming that any benefits to parenthood, as well as the costs, would accrue only to women (McDonald 2010; Romaniuk 2010). Most, like Lesthaeghe, avoid the subject altogether. Even scholars who express enthusiasm about changes that support families, as a way of encouraging fertility, focus only on public policies, and rarely, if ever, mention the ways husbands and fathers might share in the care of their homes and children (Hoem 1993; McDonald 2000; Romaniuk 2010). There has been a vast increase, however, of studies on the importance of fatherhood in men’s lives (e.g., Eggebeen 2001), as well as a great increase in father involvement (see in particular the new journal, Fathering, and the two special issues forthcoming in 2014 of the Journal of Family Issues on “Studies of Men’s Family Involvement and the Second Demographic Transition”).

Future Trajectories

The third difference between the SDT and gender revolution narratives involves likely future trajectories. From its first articulation, the architects of SDT narrative have taken a very negative view of the future consequences for families and populations; they appear to consider the behaviors linked with the SDT, particularly lowest-low fertility, to be permanent. Lesthaeghe describes these consequences in his review of his own and related studies (2010), including those of some of his critics. On the basis of this review, he rejects the optimistic view that the future families and populations of the world would achieve a ”new balance” (i.e., zero population growth) based on low mortality and a matching level of replacement fertility. He expects much lower fertility and uncommitted relationships for the foreseeable future because ”greater
economic development . . . [increases] . . . a focus on non-material needs (freedom of expression, participation and emancipation, self-realization and autonomy, recognition)” relative to “material, subsistence needs such as shelter, and physical and economic security” (Lesthaeghe 2010, p. 213).

In contrast, our understanding of the gender revolution sees many of the iconic SDT trends to be transitional. They are the consequences of the enormous destabilization in the relationships between the sexes caused by the first half of the gender revolution. This is particularly the case for the very low levels of fertility and very high levels of union dissolution. And these are very important phenomena, because very low fertility challenges the survival of rich cultures, and eventually, the future of the human race; high levels of union dissolution disrupt the lives of all involved: the couples who have invested in each other and the children whose growth and security are undermined. Stabilizing fertility and unions is important.

Some of the other trends that are frequently included as SDT phenomena, such as the growth of cohabitation and unmarried childbearing, and the delay in union formation and parenthood, are of a very different order. Replacing legal/religious ceremonies with socially recognized "couple status", which is what happens when cohabiting unions endure past a relatively brief period, is not a problem, and it is not clear why there has been such denial of this issue. Marriages, too, can be unstable; those in the US are as nearly as unstable as cohabiting unions in many parts of Europe (Heuveline, Timberlake, and Furstenberg 2003; Kennedy and Thomson 2010). Childbearing and raising within cohabiting unions are also not problems, if children are born into relatively stable unions, which is also increasingly the case in northern and western Europe (Perelli-Harris et al. 2012). The massive delays of parenthood that so concern Lesthaeghe and many other demographers do not seem so problematic, either. In the new, longer life course brought to young adults by the demographic transition, there is plenty of time to have
two children. Young people do not have to become parents while they are still in the throes of "emerging adulthood" (Arnett 2007). Young men and women need time to establish mature relationships, develop solid job or career trajectories, and, establish their own independent identities. However, there is time. Young adults can wait into their early or even mid-thirties to begin families.iii

The Second Half of the Gender Revolution

That the ongoing gender revolution might change the trajectory of SDT trends is a strong claim, and it is difficult, of course, to be definitive, as the issues are really empirical. The second half of the gender revolution is just barely underway, relatively speaking. Put simply, it requires most men and women to integrate their work and family lives, sharing in the financial support of their families as well as in the tasks of making a home and raising children. Such fundamental change is unlikely to be instantaneous.

The real pressure for such change is very recent. Despite the rapid growth in female labor force participation in the 1950s, 1960s and 1970s, men’s family care roles did not really need to change much during that period. Women were responding to new opportunities, adding new roles even as their commitment to home care remained; most working women were proud that they were able to do both. After all, in the "ideal" nuclear family of male breadwinners and female care givers under low fertility and mortality conditions, many women were underemployed, at least by the time children reached school age.iv Women’s labor force participation remained ‘counter-cyclical’ during those decades, and was strongly influenced by family considerations, lower among those with more children and higher among those with partners earning lower wages (Leibowitz and Klerman 1995).
As attitudes developed during the 1980s and 1990s that redefined women’s roles to include earning as a central part rather than an ‘add-on’ (Goldscheider and Kaufman 2006; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001), however, women’s labor force participation became increasingly responsive to their own characteristics and less to those of their immediate families (Leibowitz and Klerman 1995). This has led to pro-cyclical patterns of female labor force participation, as women dampened their responsiveness to their family situations and increasingly responded to greater opportunity by greater work effort. Hence, a contributor to the growth in inequality in developed countries has been the emergence of families with two high earning (or two low earning) partners (Karoly and Burtless 1995; Nieuwenhuis 2014). Young men now expect their wives to work; a partner with a low earnings outlook is more undesirable to men than one of a different race or religion, a much older age, or even existing children (Goldscheider and Kaufman 2006; Thomson and Bernhardt 2010).

As a result, pressure has begun to increase on men to contribute more to the well-being of their families by adding family care to their core adult roles. This pressure has been exacerbated by structural changes in the world economy, as globalization has increased uncertainty in the labor market and increased as the need for couples to have two incomes in case one failed (Duvander 1999; Oppenheimer 1997). There is, of course, major resistance to making progress on this second half of the gender revolution, at many levels, as there was to the first half. Structural constraints on the job in many countries pose great challenges to men’s increasing their familial engagement (Gerson 2010; Hochschild 1997) (the United States is notorious for the long hours workers must put in). There may also be some lingering gate-keeping by their partners, particularly with regard to child care (Hofferth and Pleck 2008) and perhaps housecleaning in Germany (Cooke 2006).
Nevertheless, younger men’s attitudes have become much more accepting of gender equality in the family (Gerson 2010; Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001), and there is much evidence that men’s family roles have begun to intensify (e.g. Aassve, Ueco, and Mencarini forthcoming). By the end of the 20th century in the US, fathers spent 5 more hours per week with their children than they had 20 years earlier (Bianchi, Robinson, and Milkie 2006). In addition, fathers’ proportion of total parental time spent on child care surpassed 40 percent (Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg 1998). Sullivan et al. (forthcoming) found significant evidence of recent increases in the contribution of younger, more highly educated fathers to child care and core domestic work, and one study in the US found that while fathers were responsible for 40 percent of child care during the week, they took on fully 47 percent on weekends (Yeung et al. 2001). Further, there is evidence that this expansion is slowly having positive effects on the family, reversing SDT trends by increasing fertility and reducing union instability. Evaluating this evidence is the focus of the remainder of this paper.

**Studying Gender Role Attitudes, Gender Equality in the Home and Demographic Outcomes**

Our theoretical position is that people maximize their well-being, given structural constraints and opportunities, and hence it is based on rational choice theory. People’s attitudes generally reflect these opportunities and constraints and tend to change as conditions change (e.g., Thornton and Young-DeMarco 2001), although often cohort succession is needed to fully realign structures and attitudes (Pampel 2011). However, in a period of rapidly changing structures, as has been the experience of the industrialized countries in the midst of the gender revolution, attitudes take on great saliance (Rindfuss, Brewster, and Kavee 1996). Attitudes formed under the old structures often persist, to help people make sense of their social worlds. This is likely to be particularly the
case if they are not well prepared by education or experience (e.g., a working mother) to function comfortably and successfully in the new gender structure. And of course, the new structure may not have taken clear shape, as remnants of the old structure persist, e.g., too many jobs that assume anyone with a job and a family has a full-time adult in the home (Gerson 2010).

Based on this approach, Figure 1 delineates the theoretical expectations of the analyses in the Swedish project we mentioned earlier, which underpin our expectation that the second half of the gender revolution will strengthen the family, and is the basis for our discussion to follow. We examine the determinants of gender role attitudes, distinguishing those reflecting attitudes towards gender roles in the public sphere of employment from those towards gender roles in the private sphere of the family. The analyses variously model them as functions of family background (including class, maternal employment, and childhood family structure), own attitudes (religiosity), and life course transitions and statuses. We then move to gender role related behaviors, including the sharing of housework and childcare and adjustments to
parenthood (the sharing of parental leave and work adjustments). We finally link these gender role related attitudes and behaviors to the key demographic outcomes of fertility, union dissolution, and couple migration strategies.

Three of the studies in the project we are reviewing here focus on factors predicting gender role attitudes. An important issue in this regard is distinguishing attitudes that focus on women’s place in the public sphere from those that tap attitudes towards men’s potential involvement in the family (Goldscheider, Oláh, and Puur 2010). Our view of the gender revolution and its two separate halves implies that many who have become comfortable with increases in female labor force participation might not favor, or even have thought of, increases in men’s roles in the home. Each of these three analyses takes a particular focus. Gähler and Oláh (2010) analyze the effects of maternal employment on men’s and women’s gender role attitudes, indicating whether this might be a self-reinforcing process. Goldscheider, Goldscheider, and Rico-González (forthcoming) examine the effects of religiosity on gender role attitudes, asking whether these effects might be contingent on the stage of the gender revolution. Finally, Kaufman, Bernhardt and Goldscheider (forthcoming) rely on the longitudinal dimension of the dataset to focus on changes in gender role attitudes that might be expected from changes in family statuses.

Three additional studies analyze factors affecting gender behavior in the home, with a focus on how the attitudes analyzed in the previous section shape behavior. Goldscheider, Goldscheider, and Rico-González (forthcoming) included actual sharing of housework and childcare in their analysis. Evertsson (forthcoming) studies directly how closely attitudes predict actual subsequent sharing of the private sphere (housework and childcare); Duvander (forthcoming) examines how gender role attitudes shape subsequent sharing of parental leave
(still very much gendered in Sweden), and Kaufman and Bernhardt (forthcoming) analyze how gender role attitudes condition work adjustments following parenthood.

Finally, we look at the effects of gender role attitudes (and often behavior) on three key demographic outcomes: couple migration (Brandén forthcoming), fertility (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Brandén 2013), and union dissolution (Oláh and Gähler 2010). This will allow us to link egalitarian gender role attitudes and behavior with SDT family changes and hence with the narrative of the second half of the gender revolution. Much of our evidence will be drawn from these Swedish studies; hence we describe the data, methods, and measures this study has made possible. We will also include results of related studies that support—or challenge—the Swedish evidence.

DATA, MEASURES, AND METHODS

These studies draw on the Young Adult Panel Study (YAPS), which was designed to enable studies of complex interrelationships between attitudes and demographic behavior. Designed from the beginning to be longitudinal, three waves of survey data collection have been carried out by Statistics Sweden (1999, 2003, and 2009). These have been combined with register data on education, income, and vital events from the mid-1980s onwards, currently including births up to 2012, and soon to be extended to 2014 (Duvander 2012). The respondents were asked to answer questions about plans, expectations and attitudes regarding family and working life, as well as factual information about their current situation and background characteristics. The questionnaire for the 2009 survey included more detailed questions than in the previous surveys about parental leave, household chores and childcare. Moreover, the respondent’s partner was
asked to fill in a questionnaire with more or less the same questions as those asked from the respondent.

The original target sample in 1999 consisted of 4,360 Swedish-born persons in the birth cohorts of 1968, 1972, and 1976; the 1980 cohort was added in 2003. An overall response rate of 65 percent in 1999 resulted in a sample of 2,820 respondents. 75 percent of those also participated in the 2003 survey, plus 708 respondents born in 1980 (their response rate was 60 percent). In the 2009, survey all persons who had participated in at least one of the previous surveys were contacted again, resulting in a total number of respondents of 1,986. At the time of the 2009 survey they were 26, 32, 34 or 40 years old. A total of 1,385 persons participated in all three surveys. In addition, 1,180 partners returned questionnaires, which gave a dataset for 2009 containing information about a total of 3,166 individuals. The panel data in the YAPS database have made it possible to undertake a set of analyses designed to unravel the determinants of gender equality and its effects on demographic life-course transitions, particularly childbearing and union dissolution, and hence is a powerful dataset for unraveling at the individual level the dynamics of our argument that the second half of the gender revolution will mitigate the negative trends linked with the SDT.

The studies use normal multivariate models. Many take advantage of the longitudinal nature of the data by examining relationships between prior attitudes and later experiences, or even between prior attitudes and experiences and later attitudes and experiences. The dataset includes a wide range of information on family-related attitudes and behaviors, supplemented by information from Swedish population registers.
RESULTS

Figure 1 summarizes the structure of these analyses, and we will frame our presentation around it. We will note factors linked with egalitarian gender role attitudes both in the public and private spheres; then those factors, including gender role attitudes, linked with egalitarian gender role behavior within the family (balancing housework, childcare, parental leave, and work hours). Finally, we examine the results of analyses linking gendered domestic behavior with demographic outcomes, focusing on fertility, union dissolution, and attitudes towards migration for one’s own or one’s partner’s long-distance opportunities.

**Predicting gender role attitudes**

Consistent with other research (Thornton and Freedman 1979; Morgan and Walker 1983; Harris and Firestone 1998; Chatard and Selimbegovic 2007), all three Swedish papers that examined the determinants of egalitarian gender role attitudes found that higher education is related to holding more egalitarian attitudes (Gähler and Oláh 2010; Goldscheider, Goldscheider, and Rico-González forthcoming; Kaufman, Bernhardt, and Goldscheider forthcoming). The effect of education appears to be independent of how the attitudes towards gender roles are measured, because it increases egalitarian attitudes both in terms of women’s role in the public sphere and men’s roles in the private sphere (Table 1). Hence, increasing educational levels are reinforcing egalitarian gender role attitudes.

Perhaps because Sweden has experienced high levels of female labor force participation for many decades (Stanfors 2003) and motherhood has only a small effect on women’s weekly employment hours (Misra, Budig, and Boekmann 2011), the other important predictors of egalitarian gender role attitudes have their effects only on the role of men in the private sphere;
Table 1. Significant Predictors of Egalitarian Gender Role Attitudes in the Public and Private Spheres (for variables included in the analyses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public sphere</th>
<th>Private sphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's education&lt;sup&gt;a,b,c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R's mother was employed while R growing up&lt;sup&gt;a&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R grew up in a nontraditional family&lt;sup&gt;a,b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R's religiosity&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R married (vs. cohabiting)&lt;sup&gt;b,c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent childless&lt;sup&gt;a,b,c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>Positive&lt;sup&gt;x&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R has (another) child&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>(Positive)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R has (another) child&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<sup>a</sup> Olah & Gahler (2010), tables 2a and 2b  
<sup>b</sup> Goldscheider, Goldscheider & Gonzalez (forthcoming), table 3  
<sup>c</sup> Kaufman, Bernhardt, & Goldscheider (forthcoming), tables 3 & 4  
<sup>x</sup> only when attitudes prior to becoming a parent are not controlled; when this source of selectivity is controlled, parenthood does not affect attitudes towards sharing housework or childcare  
<sup>y</sup> women only

There is so little variation in support for female employment that it is difficult to find significant effects. These results suggest that it is important to distinguish between attitudes towards women’s role in the public sphere and men’s involvement in the home, as factors linked with these two types of attitudes differ. This view is particularly reinforced by the results for maternal employment. Growing up with a mother who was employed, which one might think would have its greatest impact on attitudes towards women taking a role in the public sphere, in fact has its effect primarily on egalitarian attitudes towards an egalitarian sharing of the private sphere. Evidently, even if increased female labor force participation has had a relatively weak effect on their spouse’s attitudes, generational succession is reinforcing its effect on those of their children.
Those who have experienced parental union dissolution also have more egalitarian attitudes on men’s roles in the private sphere, perhaps because most of them had the same experience—an employed mother).

A related study using these Swedish data (Lahne and Wenné 2012) reinforces the effects of these background factors, and also found other factors in the parental background that were linked with respondents’ egalitarian gender role attitudes, although the effects differ by gender. Women’s gender role attitudes were more egalitarian not only when their own education was higher, but also when their mother’s education was higher. This applied both to public sphere attitudes and private sphere attitudes. Men, in contrast, reported more egalitarian gender role attitudes (vis-à-vis both spheres) when they reported that their parents divided housework more equally when they were growing up.

These young adults’ attitudes were also shaped by their own religiosity, as well as by their behaviour and experiences. A particularly interesting result suggests that the familistic orientation associated with high levels of religiosity can have very different impacts in the second half of the gender revolution than it has had during the first half (Goldscheider, Goldscheider, and Rico-González forthcoming). While most research has found that the more religious tend to reject egalitarian relationships (for a review, see Davis and Greenstein, 2009), this might be much less the case in Sweden, which has placed an extremely strong emphasis on men’s getting more involved in the family and its tasks. This analysis examined such a possibility by interacting personal religiosity with religious context (denomination), testing whether the relationship between religiosity and gender role attitudes might differ between Swedes whose religiosity is rooted in religious denominations linked with more traditional gender roles (e.g., the substantial numbers of Turkish Moslems and members of more fundamentalist and conservative Christian groups, such as Catholics and Orthodox Christians) and those whose religiosity is rooted in the
dominant Swedish (Lutheran) Church. The results indicate that this is indeed the case, with particularly dramatic findings for gender role attitudes that focus attention on men’s role in the home. Apparently, even the relationship between religiosity and gender role attitudes “reverses” in the second half of the gender revolution.

All of these papers found important impacts of the transition to parenthood, but union status (married vs. cohabiting) made no difference (a common finding in Sweden). Respondents who had not had a child by the second survey wave (2003) were more positive towards sharing tasks in the private sphere than were those who had become parents, again with no impact on attitudes towards women’s roles in the public sphere. It is not clear from these analyses, however, whether those who become parents in this relatively young sample are less egalitarian (selectivity) or whether parenthood decreases egalitarian attitudes. Kaufman, Bernhardt, and Goldscheider (forthcoming), in contrast, are able to show that for most gender-role related attitudes, becoming a parent does not make Swedish young adults less egalitarian than they were prior to becoming parents. That paper also shows, however, that respondents’ attitudes towards sharing parental leave (not included in Table 1) became less egalitarian when they had children. Parental leave is still highly gendered in Sweden, although men have been increasingly taking a larger share (Duvander forthcoming). This is a clear case where behavior shapes attitudes.

**Do gender role attitudes affect domestic gender equality?**

Three additional papers from the project examine the impacts of holding egalitarian gender role attitudes on a set of important indicators of how couples’ share the tasks necessary to support and care for their families in both the public and private spheres. These are couples’ divisions of housework and childcare, who takes parental leave (and how much), and whether and if so who
adjusts work effort to parenthood. Three of these outcomes have a bearing on decisions of nearly all new parents in the industrialized world; parental leave, of course, is not so widely available. In Table 2, we summarize the results of these studies.

Table 2. Significant Predictors of Actual Sharing of Work Hours, Housework, Childcare, and Family Leave (for variables included in the analyses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Egalitarian Sharing</th>
<th>Housework(^{a,b})</th>
<th>Childcare(^{a,b})</th>
<th>Family leave(^{c})</th>
<th>Work adjustments(^{d})</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's education</td>
<td>Positive(^{b})</td>
<td>ns(^{b})</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive (men)(^{x})</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R gender=female</td>
<td>Negative(^{b})</td>
<td>Negative(^{b})</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Positive (women)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R grew up in a nontraditional family</td>
<td>ns(^{b})</td>
<td>ns(^{b})</td>
<td></td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R married (vs. cohabiting)</td>
<td>ns(^{b})</td>
<td>Positive(^{b})</td>
<td></td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent childless</td>
<td>Positive(^{b})</td>
<td>NA (Positive)</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R has (another) child(^{c})</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men's gender equality attitudes | Positive\(^{a}\) | Positive\(^{a}\) | Positive | Positive (men) |

Women's gender equality attitudes | Positive\(^{a}\) | Positive\(^{a}\) | ns | ns |

\(^{a}\) Evertsson (forthcoming), Tables 2 & 4
\(^{b}\) Goldscheider, Goldscheider, & Gonzalez (forthcoming), Table 3
\(^{c}\) Duvander (forthcoming), Table 2
\(^{d}\) Kaufman and Bernhardt (forthcoming), Table 5
\(^{x}\) both partners are highly educated, results not presented

The results for education should not be surprising, given the results of the previous analyses of gender role attitudes. Respondents with more education are more likely to share housework and to share parental leave. Similarly, in couples with more education, men are more likely to make work adjustments to a new child, such as traveling less for work and reducing their work hours,
than men with less education. More surprising is that there is no effect of education on sharing childcare, unlike in many European studies (cf. Esping-Anderson 2009). This suggests that, just as female employment is both nearly universal and universally approved, sharing childcare, unlike housework, is close to that level; Swedes of nearly all backgrounds and classes share childcare.

Even in Sweden, however, men perceive themselves as sharing housework and childcare more equally than women perceive that they do; men also perceive that parental leave is shared more equally than women do. Women take more parental leave (Duvander forthcoming), and make more work adjustments than men (Kaufman and Bernhardt forthcoming). Of course, what is stunning about Sweden is that men take so much more parental leave (Duvander forthcoming) and make so many work adjustments (Kaufman, Bernhardt, and Goldscheider forthcoming), than they used to (Nasen 2012), and than in other industrialized countries (Misra, Budig, and Boekmann 2011).

Union status has somewhat inconsistent effects on sharing household and other responsibilities. Goldscheider, Goldscheider, and Rico-González (forthcoming) found that for childcare (but not housework), married couples share more equally than cohabiting couples, but that otherwise union status had no effect in any of the studies that included it. This is the only effect of union status that appears in these studies, and seems to suggest that the greater instability of cohabiting unions might be inhibiting men from a high level of investment in their children. Growing up in a nontraditional family also had no effect on sharing behavior, unlike its effect on attitudes towards sharing housework (Gähler and Oláh 2010). The result of being a parent on housework is consistent with the result we showed earlier for attitudes towards sharing housework, which is that children are linked with a more traditional division of labor, although again, it is not clear what the direction of the causal arrow is.
Finally, as would be expected, holding more egalitarian gender role attitudes increases couples’ sharing of housework and childcare (Evertsson forthcoming), as well as sharing parental leave and making work adjustments to new children. There are surprises, however. These appear both in the more detailed patterns shown in the study of the effects of attitudes on sharing (Evertsson forthcoming), as well as in the study of the effects of gender role attitudes on sharing parental leave (Duvander forthcoming).

First, as has been found in other studies (Davis and Greenstein 2009), men’s attitudes have a stronger effect on the domestic situation than women’s in each of the studies. Evertsson (forthcoming) uses the couple data available in the 2009 interview, and shows that it is indeed important to distinguish housework from childcare, although these two behaviors are linked positively. Thus men spend more time in housework when they live in a family with a more gender equal division of child care. She finds that women’s gender role attitudes are linked with their own hours in housework and childcare, with more egalitarian women cutting down on their hours, but there is no link between women’s gender role attitudes and their male partner’s housework hours. In contrast, when men hold relatively egalitarian attitudes, not only do they spend more hours in housework and childcare, but their female partner spends fewer hours.

As we noted above, the gender pattern of taking parental leave is highly skewed towards women in Sweden, although of course, more gender equal than in the many countries where only maternity leave is available, whether supported by employers or governments. Duvander (forthcoming) finds that the sharing of parental leave is responsive to men’s gender role attitudes but not to women’s, consistent with Evertsson’s results. A major concern of this analysis was to distinguish the extent to which men’s use of parental leave reflected their egalitarian approach to family life versus how much it simply reflected a more general familistic orientation. This has been a frequent concern among studies of men’s use of parental leave in those countries where it
is relatively available and not costly, because levels of salary replacement are high; some men might just enjoy being with children more than other men. Hence, her models include not just gender role attitudes but also items that reflect more general familistic orientations.

Interestingly, she found that a more familistic orientation did not affect men’s length of parental leave (although it did women’s). For men, it was in fact gender role attitudes that had a significant effect. Perhaps most fathers, once freed of a concern that involvement with children is not “manly,” can be involved parents.

As could be expected, economic concerns were more important for men in the decision of how much leave to take than was the case for women, as it was found that an orientation towards the economic rewards from work significantly reduces the likelihood of a long parental leave for men, but not for women. Therefore Duvander concludes that reforms aiming at a more gender-equal use of the parental leave ought to create clear economic incentives for such behavior.

**Predicting demographic outcomes: migration, fertility, dissolution**

Given the long-standing evidence that increased gender equality (at least in the public sphere) has been hard on families, reducing union formation and fertility and increasing union dissolution, to find that increased gender equality in the private sphere of the family might strengthen the family would be the biggest turnaround of all. In this section, we review findings for Sweden on the demographic behaviors of fertility, union dissolution, and even gendered couple migration patterns, which suggest exactly this, together with findings from related research. It seems that indeed, some turnarounds are also underway at individual level, based also on what is beginning to appear elsewhere in the literature linking gender equality and demographic behavior.
Although none of the Swedish studies examined this question, the first life course transition that is affected by men’s egalitarian gender role attitudes is partnership formation. An early study using US data found that men with more egalitarian attitudes had a greater likelihood of entering a cohabiting union (but not a marital one) than men with less egalitarian attitudes (Kaufman 2000), using a two-item scale that focused on the traditional division of labor. The study did not examine overall union formation, however; this was added by a powerful analysis of 13 industrialized countries (Sevilla-Sanz 2010), which found that men with more egalitarian attitudes were both more likely to cohabit and more likely to enter a union, overall, than men with less egalitarian attitudes.

Moving on to fertility, there is increasing evidence that men’s greater involvement in home making and childcare has the potential for increasing fertility. This has been found in countries with “lowest-low” fertility such as Italy (Pinnelli and Fiori 2006) and in countries with low but not lowest-low fertility, including both those that provide little support for families, like the US (Torr and Short 2004) and those that provide major support for families by the state and employers (normally mandated by the state), such as Sweden (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Brandén 2013). This link between gender equality and demographic outcomes has been increasingly widely studied, both in individual countries and comparatively (for recent reviews, cf. Balbo, Mills, and Billari 2013; Goldscheider, Bernhardt and Brandén 2013; Goldscheider, Oláh, and Puur, 2010; Neyer, Lappegård, and Vignoli 2013; Thévenon and Gauthier 2011).

In the Swedish study we review here (Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Brandén 2013), egalitarian gender role attitudes only support fertility when household tasks are also shared; in fact, those least likely to make a transition to a second birth were women who had reported egalitarian gender role attitudes but later described their household’s division of housework in traditional terms (Table 3). Further, all of the effects of egalitarian attitudes appear for second
births, suggesting that studies that use total fertility, or the transition to parenthood, might miss finding an effect. Nevertheless, this is a key transition, as it is the one that is linked with replacement fertility.

Table 3. Significant Predictors of Fertility, Gendered Migration, and Union Dissolution (for variables included in the analyses)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Second births (women)a</th>
<th>Willingness to move for partner's jobb</th>
<th>Union dissolutionc</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent's education</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>ns x</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R grew up in a nontraditional family</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Positive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>NA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R married (vs. cohabiting)</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Negative (women)</td>
<td>Negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent childless</td>
<td>NA</td>
<td>Negative (women)</td>
<td>ns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R has (another) child</td>
<td>ns</td>
<td>(Positive)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Egalitarian gender role attitudes (given traditional behavior) Negative Less effect of gender Negative

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Note:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a Goldscheider, Bernhardt &amp; Branden (2013), table 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b Brandén (forthcoming), tables M &amp; n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c Oláh &amp; Gahler (forthcoming), table 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interestingly, more educated women were more likely to make the transition to a second birth than less educated women, like the findings of Goldstein and Kenney (2001) and Torr (2010) for union formation. Not surprisingly, at least in this case, those who were married were more likely to make the transition to a second birth. Nevertheless, the key finding is that when domestic tasks are shared, couples are more likely to contribute two children to Swedish population growth.

The third fundamental demographic process, migration, has been much less the focus of SDT theorizing. The rise of female labor force participation (the first half of the gender revolution), however, has produced a substantial research literature showing for many places that
couples continue to treat men’s career needs as the priority over women’s (Boyle, Cooke, Halfacree and Smith 2003; Cooke 2008; Shauman 2010), including in Sweden (Åström and Westerlund 2009). Brandén (forthcoming) takes on the Swedish challenge, and examines how gender role attitudes might affect gendered migration patterns. As might be expected, she finds that although couples generally expect to move more to accommodate men’s rather than women’s career opportunities, gender role attitudes shape respondents’ willingness to move for their partner, with greatly muted gender differences among egalitarian respondents.

Finally, there is also increasing evidence that men’s engagement in the home stabilizes unions. Demographers and their intellectual cousins, economists and structural sociologists, have largely ignored the possibility that there may be link between gender equality and union stability, in part because they are so convinced that the relationship is the reverse. And in many countries and at many times, they were likely right. During the first half of the gender revolution, it was married women’s entry into the labor force that appeared to be destabilizing gender relationships, because women’s new independence allowed them to leave difficult marriages (Johnson and Skinner 1986; Ruggles 1997).

As the relationship between female labor force participation (gender equity in the public sphere) and fertility appears to have reversed, however, it is likely that this should also be the case for the relationship between women’s labor force participation and union dissolution, as well, at least if it comes with gender equity in the private sphere. In each case, what appears to be happening is that the first half of the gender revolution, the ‘anti-family’ half, is giving way to the second half, the ‘pro-family’ half (Goldscheider and Waite 1991). The early US study (Kaufman 2000) found a similar result; that men with more egalitarian attitudes were less likely to dissolve their union.
Interestingly, family sociologists and psychologists, together with related scholars, have long known that men’s involvement with domestic tasks increased women’s happiness (e.g., Cox and Paley 2003). A few economists and demographers are starting to take notice, as well. A recent paper (Sigle-Rushton 2010) re-examines the studies by economists, starting with Becker (1977), and finds that, at least in the United Kingdom, fathers’ home production stabilizes marriage regardless of mothers’ employment status. A similar result appears in a recent cross-national study looking at the effects on union dissolution of female labor force participation, i.e., gender equality in the public sphere (Cooke, et al. 2013). Based on an analysis of 11 western, industrialized countries, Cooke and her large team (15) of co-authors that the (un)stabilizing effects of a gendered division of labor in the public sphere depended on the amount of state support to families. In Finland, Norway, and Sweden, wives’ employment predicts a significantly lower risk of divorce relative to couples with non-employed wives; there was no relationship in Australia, Flanders, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom. Only in the United States, with its nearly total lack of support for families, did a wife’s employment significantly increase the risk of divorce.

Turning back to the issue of gender equality in the private sphere, Oláh and Gähler (forthcoming) find that couples in Sweden in which the male partner participates more in domestic tasks are less likely to separate (given egalitarian gender role attitudes). This result, however, may depend on context, as another study finds that while this pattern also appears in the US, male participation appears to increase union dissolution in Germany, suggesting that the balance between the increased strains on men and relief for women might tip in the other direction in situations in which few men participate in their homes (Cooke 2006).

Why might more egalitarian men be less likely to dissolve their marriages? While the couple relationship and its happiness is often the concern (see Barstad forthcoming, for a study of
the effect of men’s participation in housework and relationship satisfaction), it is also possible that men who are more involved in their homes and families are more reluctant to leave their children. Given the vast asymmetry in child custody in western, industrialized societies, men with strong relationships with their children would be less willing to leave them, whatever their relationships with the children’s mothers. It is also possible that concerns about the stability of their unions might lead men to disinvest in their relationships with their children. So increasingly, studies seem to be showing that families might become stronger, not weaker, in the second half of the gender revolution.

**CONCLUDING DISCUSSION**

This paper has compared two approaches to the family-demographic phenomena called the SDT. The approach taken by the chief theorists of the SDT (Lesthaeghe and colleagues) predicts continued family heterogeneity and breakdown resulting from the pursuit of individualism; our approach focuses on the two halves of the gender revolution, which predicts increased family strength with the incorporation of men in family care. The approach based on the SDT narrative identifies changes in ideation as the principle cause of the SDT, specifically the development of individualism and other ”higher order needs,” and treats the central family relationships of partnership and parenthood as relatively unimportant in adult lives. The approach based on the gender revolution identifies structural changes in women’s roles in the public sphere (employment), i.e., the “first half” of the gender revolution, to have disrupted gender relationships and hence contributed to these negative trends in fertility and union stability identified with the SDT narrative. This approach, which assumes that committed partner and parental relationships are indeed important to most people, however, implies that men’s increased
involvement in the home, the ”second half” of the gender revolution, has the promise of increasing fertility and union stability. Much of the paper provides evidence, primarily from studies of Sweden, but also from other countries, in support of the gender revolution theoretical approach. Most critically, we find that the gender revolution to be increasing fertility and decreasing union dissolution.

As the argument makes clear, however, this is an ongoing process of social change, and demography (like other social sciences) does not have a good track record in understanding ongoing demographic changes, whether based on our experience with trying to understand the (first) Demographic Transition in its early decades or the baby boom. Our relatively optimistic argument rests on privileging structural explanations over ideational ones and on expecting that the central family relationships of committed couple-ness and parenthood (and eventual grandparenthood) will continue to be important in adults’ lives. It is based on an assessment that modern adults will continue to seek these relationships, especially once it means that they no longer have to accept different roles from those they grew up to expect.

One of the most positive results of these studies is that most of them suggest reinforcing trends. Not all; presumably the pressure from increasing egalitarian attitudes that has come from parental breakup will be reduced if rates of union dissolution continue to decline. But it appears that the effects of cohort succession will be reinforced by the growth in maternal employment and particularly of female education. Moving beyond such distributional changes, the growth of reversing relationships, such as between religiosity and gender role egalitarianism/traditionalism, suggests that many factors might come together to speed the completion of the two halves of the gender revolution.

Of course, there are many limitations to these analyses, particularly in the strong emphasis on Sweden. Sweden is clearly a powerful case, given how much further advanced it is on both
halves of the gender revolution. The country has made extraordinarily progress on the first half of the gender revolution, with its high levels of female labor force participation (even though a lot is part time), and it also has high and increasing levels of male participation in the tasks of their homes and families, strongly supported by state policies.

Further, in a world of great and increasing class inequalities, Sweden stands out as an extraordinarily equal society, which is a context in which family-friendly public policies are most effective (Thévenon and Gauthier 2011). Noting the strong class differences in family patterns in the US, a country which as dominated research on family and gender for many decades, we searched for class differences in the relationships between gender role attitudes and behavior, on the one hand, and fertility and union dissolution, on the other, and found nothing (research not presented). Further, it seems likely that gender role flexibility has a long history in the countries of northwestern origins (cite?), unlike countries of central and southern Europe and east Asia, with their high levels of gender essentialism (Brinton and Lee 2012). The gender revolution requires massive shifts in family roles; it is not clear that many countries are either willing or able to embrace them.

Certainly, change has not been instantaneous. The gender revolution is characterized as ”incomplete” (Esping-Anderson 2009), as ”unfinished” (Gerson 2010), and sometimes even as ”stalled” (too many to cite), which is not surprising, given how entrenched separate spheres gender roles have been. However, as each new cohort sees the possibilities of a new balance in family roles, with men and women whose mothers worked, who have seen their parents sharing, and have shared work places with those of the opposite sex, these stresses should wane. And of course, as Malthus himself posited: ”the passion between the sexes is necessary and will remain nearly in its present state.” Demographers rejected this postulate vis-à-vis fertility long ago, but it may be more persuasive in the context of couple relationships.
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Kaufman, Gayle, Eva Bernhardt, and Frances Goldscheider. Forthcoming. “Family Transitions and Gender Role Attitude Change in Sweden.”


NOTES

i Likely there were earlier gender revolutions, as when men first left agriculture and near continuous face-to-face interaction with their wives and children, leaving women to assume many of their tasks; or when the development of settled agriculture led to the growth in private property, increasing the importance of inheritance rights and hence men’s greater concern over paternity and women’s childbearing.

ii The rise in divorce was at least in part the result of the great loosening of the draconian laws that had been restricting or even preventing divorce. It is not clear what a ‘natural’ level of divorce might be. William Goode (1990) posited a curvilinear pattern, with high levels in pre-industrial societies, followed by lower levels that were institutionalized by civil and religious forces seeking to stabilize the family; the recent period may simply be reverting to the older pattern.

iii Although if they want to support their children well into adulthood and still experience a rewarding retirement and grandparental stage, neither men nor women should wait much longer, even if the biological challenges for women are solved by freezing eggs in adolescence or early adulthood.

iv It seems likely that the growth in “home schooling” in the United States among culturally conservative groups is in part a response to these changes in women’s lives.

v The vast majority of scholars of the increase in female labor force participation have made no connection to its potential effects on men’s roles in the home. A particularly poignant example of this type of thinking is Margaret Mead’s delineation of “the three sexes” (Mead 1965), in which she distinguishes domestic women, professional women (like herself) and men.

vi For details, see www.suda.su.se/yaps.